Mr Thomas Ross, LL.D., F.S.A.Scot., has kindly pointed out that I was in error in stating that it had come from this place. He informs me that about forty years ago he saw it in the possession of an old woman in Dunblane, who told him that it came from the Cathedral there, and that about twenty years later he saw it again, but in the possession of Dr Stewart, Dunblane, who had obtained it at the dispersal of the effects of the old woman referred to. I purchased it from the dealer who bought it at the sale of Miss Stewart's effects. (See MacGibbon and Ross's *Ecclesiastical Architecture of Scotland*, vol. ii. p. 107.)

IV.

EARTH-HOUSE OR GALLERIED BUILDING NEAR DURNESS, SUTHERLAND. By JOHN MATHIESON, F.R.S.E., F.R.S.G.S., Corresponding Member.

This earth-house, locally known as Tigh na Fiarnain (house of the Fingalians), is situated near the summit of the range of mountains which separates Loch Eriboll from the Kyle of Durness. It stands on the slope of a small hillock, nearly 1000 feet above sea-level, about one mile south of Meall Meadhonach (middle hill), and about one mile and a half west of Portnacon Pier, and an equal distance from the earth-house at Port Chamuill, as shown in fig. 1.

The building consists of a roughly circular chamber measuring about 17 feet in greatest internal diameter, the wall, which is of dry-stone building, measuring from about 2 feet to 4 feet 6 inches in thickness. Abutting on the south-west is a crescentic-shaped enclosure or annexe on the south-west, which measures about 26 feet in greatest length and about 10 feet in greatest breadth internally. The entrance to the main chamber is on the east side, commanding a good view of the sea as far as Whiten Head. The entrance passage is well built, and measures 2½ feet wide, but no trace of a doorway in the annexe is discernible.

Built on ground sloping to the north, the south side of the main structure is level with the ground, but the north side has a well-built dry-stone wall rising on the outside to a height of 4 feet 6 inches. The adjoining enclosure is almost level with the surface, except at X in fig. 2, where the wall is about 2 feet in height above ground. The inner part of the building is so tumbled in that it is impossible, without excavation, to say what was the original formation. There are six pillars arranged round the centre and one against the eastern wall.

The pillars marked *a*, *b*, *c*, and *d* on fig. 2 stand about 4 feet high, and slabs measuring 5 feet in length radiate from these to the circumference. The space between these lintels also appears to have been covered with large slabs, of which there are plenty in the immediate neighbourhood.

This earth-house differs greatly from the usual types found in Aberdeenshire, Forfarshire, and some of the southern and western counties of Scotland. These generally have a long tunnel-like passage

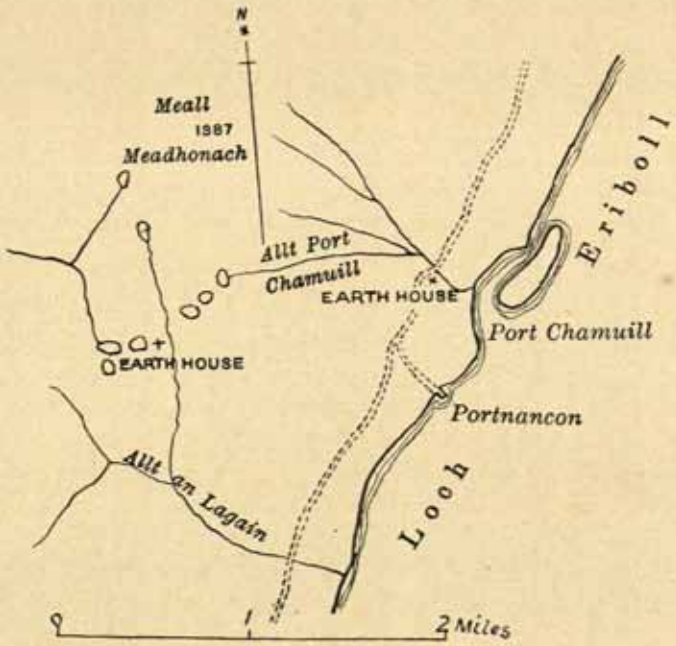

Fig. 1. Earth-house near Durness—Map of Locality.

leading into a cell, which may either be of circular shape, with a domical roof, or a mere widening of the passage. But it belongs to a class of which quite a number appear in the parish of Latheron, Caithness, where they are known as "wags," a corruption of the Gaelic *uamh*, a cave, or its diminutive *uamhag*. The latter are fully described, under the term "Galleried Buildings," in the *Inventory of Ancient Monuments in Caithness*, Nos. 248–263. These buildings are doubtlessly related to a class of earth-house which occurs in North Uist[1] and South Uist, and probably in some of the other adjacent islands. In these Hebridean structures the building is circular, but, instead of pillar stones

[1] Beveridge, *North Uist*, p. 120.

round the centre with lintels radiating from them, as in the "wags," they have radial walls which, like the lintels of the "wags," probably supported the roof. The central part in the Hebridean building seems to have been left uncovered, as hearths have been found at this spot in several of those excavated. It is probable that in the earth-house under

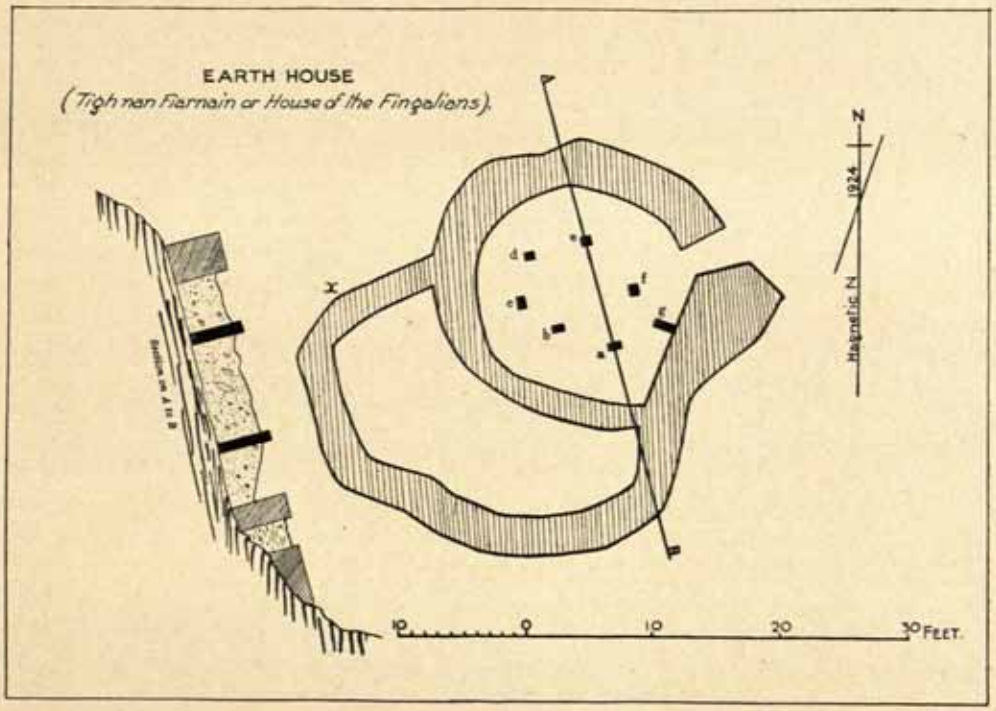

Fig. 2. Plan and Section of Earth-house near Durness.

discussion the central part was also open to the heavens, but this is a point which could only be elucidated by excavation.

Discoveries in the Broch of Dun Troddan, Glenelg,[1] seem to show that there had been a somewhat similar arrangement of pillars, but made of wood, for supporting the inner end of a roof whose outer extremity rested on the scarcement on the inner face of the wall of the broch.

There is a local tradition that a road or tunnel through the granite rock joined the earth-house just described to the other at Port Chamuill.

[1] *Proceedings*, vol. lv. p. 90.